DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 204 345 SP 018 688

AUTHOR Reed, Horace B.
TITLE Concepts for a Staff Development Design on Networking.
PUB DATE May 81
NOTE 8p.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Community Education: Community Programs: Cooperative Planning: Coordinators: *Linking Agents: Networks: *Program Design: *Staff Development: State Departments of Education: Workshops

ABSTRACT

The guiding principles that make up a cohesive design for training state community education coordinators is developed from four main constructs: (1) the major goal, of enhancing community quality of life, where the focus should be on synergy, citizen empowerment, and change agency leadership by the coordinators: (2) community education as a system of interrelated agencies, with a broader vision of education that includes lifelong learning: (3) interaction among agencies through networking (loose, infrequent linkages) and collaboration (strong, highly visible, and personal contacts): and (4) selection of implementing principles and strategies that emphasize humane training processes and that can be used in workshop settings. Workshops planned around these objectives use needs analysis techniques, role clarification, interagency attendance requirements, and process analysis. (FG)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED204345

CONCEPTS FOR A STAFF DEVELOPMENT DESIGN ON NETWORKING

Prepared for the Federal Community Education Grant, "National Management Training in Interagency Collaboration for SEA Community Education Leaders, 1980-81."

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Horace B. Reed

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

By

Horace B. Reed, for the Community Education Resource Center, School of Education, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Mass. 01003

May, 1981

SP010688

CONCEPTS FOR A STAFF DEVELOPMENT DESIGN ON NETWORKING

Complex staff development designs are constructed from conceptual bases. Often these bases are taken for granted by designers. An effort to construct a systematic view of guiding principles helps insure cohesion among the many decisions that go into the total construct. The purpose of this essay is to sketch the guiding principles used in a training design on networking,[1] regarding such components as target populations, needs analysis, goals and objectives, resources and constraints, implementing strategies and activities, materials, and evaluation of processes and products.[2]

The primary target population for these workshops is the State Community Education (SEA) Coordinators of the fifty states. The rationale of the community education movement provides the value context for selecting the concepts that guided the training design decisions, from theories in philosophy, sociology, psychology, political science, economics, and anthropology. Three sets of workshops were established and offered over the period of a year: a national level one, with SEA's and their respective supervisors; six regional level ones, with each SEA and two peers representing other state level agencies selected by the SEA; and two bi-national workshops with SEA's and community education leaders from higher education institutions and other organizations.[3]

The conceptual framework is developed from a web of four main constructs: (a) the major goal of community quality of life; (b) the

---

[1]During 1980-81, the staff of the Community Education Resource Center (CERC), School of Education, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, designed and implemented workshops on networking skills, supported by a Federal Community Education Program grant.

[2]A detailed Training Handbook on Networking Skills is being prepared by the CERC staff, applicable to any target group. It is not the intention of this essay to present the specific elements of these components.

[3]The last set of workshops is cosponsored by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation and the Federal Government.

vision that sees community education as a system of interrelated agencies; (c) the objective of interaction among agencies through networking and collaboration; (d) and the selection of implementing principles and strategies that emphasize humane training processes.

Community Quality of Life

The long-range purpose of networking skill training with the SEA's is to further the quality of life in communities. Focal points for addressing this purpose are daily life functions in communities: employment, interpersonal relations, health, lifelong learning, safety, justice, creation and recreation, service, production and consumption, resource use and conservation, etc.

Three broad objectives relevant to SEA's' networking skills are concepts of synergy, of citizen empowerment and of change agency leadership. Synergy refers to maximizing agency resources, where networking among two or more agencies creates a gestalt that is greater than the sum of the separate agency resources. Agency resources may be material (space, facilities, wealth) or interpersonal (time, personal energy, ideas, inspiration, support, information). Synergy involves the conservation of resources, the sharing of resources and the invention of resources.

The objective of citizen empowerment has philosophical, political, social and economic implications. Crucial for SEA's are networking skills which support and encourage citizen involvement: facilitating, leadership styles, consensus decision making, cooperative conflict resolution, team building, communication.

Focusing on crucial life functions of local communities calls for change agency leadership by SEA's. Life functions such as employment, justice and health are experienced through established social structures making up the fabric of communities. To help provide leadership in

improving a community's social structures demands management and organizational development skills. It is apparent that this calls for a leadership role that both conserves culture and, where needed, leads culture.

Education as a System

To enhance community quality of life requires seeing education as an inclusive system. Education is a significant function of many agencies and organizations in communities. In addition to formal schooling, components of this educational system include human service agencies, libraries, business and union groups, government agencies, museums, self-help groups. One well established movement that supports this vision is community education. Wide variability characterizes how broadly community education practitioners view education. Some are largely concerned with school and community interactions, while others envision a wheel of community agencies and groups, schools being one of the spokes. The present and future thrust of the movement is towards the broader vision.

Community education seen as a system demands interactions among agencies to enhance growth of individuals and development of the community. A long history of professional experience is available to practioners from formal pedagogy concerning individual development of youth. When individual development is also seen as lifelong education, there are further practioner skills required, ones relevant to pre-school ages, out-of-school youth, disenfranchised groups, young and old adults. And the community development emphasis requires still additional new skills by community education practitioners.

Staff development designed for training in lifelong learning utilizes theories and information across many approaches: adult education, early

childhood education, developmental concepts and nonformal education. The added emphasis of community development also implies adult and nonformal educational approaches, along with concepts of organizational development, of the learning society and networking.

Interaction

Networking as a general term refers to the interaction among persons and agencies. The interaction may involve non-material elements such as information, expertise, ideas, psychological support, inspiration, time, and energy as well as tangibles of space, facilities and wealth.

It is useful to picture a continuum from networking to collaboration. Networking involves very loose linkages among participants, is often not highly visible to the outside world and may involve only infrequent personal contact. Collaboration involves strong linkages, high visibility and personal contact. Four stages along this continuum may be described as networking, coordination, cooperation, and collaboration. Each of these stages will be most appropriate for specific situations, tasks, populations, social-economic-political contexts and available resources.

While there are commonalities of appropriate skills for community education facilitators across all parts of this continuum, there are also distinctions of appropriate skills between networking and collaboration. Networking skills include the ability to: see how people in other agencies might be useful to oneself; conceive of many resources you might offer to others; persuade others to stay in contact; communicate easily and effectively; and conceive of useful, nonthreatening communication vehicles. Collaborative skills include the ability to set mutually advantageous specific goals; devise planning processes that are efficient and involve all parties; form the group into a team with agreed upon roles and where differences are respected; use management skills that facilitate collaborative leadership,

consensus decision making and constructive conflict resolution; choose linkage devices such as written agreements, temporary project teams, permanent consortiums.

Humane Training Process

Training strategies and activities consistent with the objectives of the workshops on networking are derived from several concepts. Needs analysis techniques draw on principles of responding to participants' situations. Role clarification recognizes that training for new networks and skills is futile unless participants are also helped to restructure their professional roles so as to make realistic their implementation of these new skills. Further, attention to organizational development concerns, along with role clarification, is required to provide the wider contextual support for participants to utilize the new skills. The paired attendance requirement that each SEA invite someone with relevant decision making powers to attend the national level workshop with them, was designed to provide support for organization change as required to free up changes in SEA role. A triad attendance requirement for the regional level workshops, with each SEA inviting two people from other agencies, was similarly planned as a future support for implementing new networking skills that challenge established organizational traditions. The third set of workshops brought together potential networking groups of SEA's and institutions of higher education, with potentials for seeing education as a system and for long range planning by the states.

The workshop design modeled skills that are required on the job as the SEA's explore the possibilities of networking. Workshop sessions on force field analysis expand on competencies for identifying positive and restraining forces in one's work setting, for moving networking forward through changing some of those forces. Making specific detailed action

planning to construct realistic new networks for the weeks following the workshop, buttressed each participant's positive expectations of actual use of newly acquired skills. Each session of the workshop was also used as a living case for process analysis. The group interactions inherent in networking require competencies of SEA's to deal constructively with group issues of problem solving, conflict resolution, communications. Workshop sessions involved all of these issues, and training facilitators provided techniques to analyze these group processes.

Process evaluation of the workshop utilized the principle of participant perceptions as a major data source: the participation of the workshop attenders and of the training staff. A more product-oriented evaluation uses information on SEA participants' implementation of their networking action plans.

Conclusion

Conceptualizing, designing and implementing training is carried out within several concentric contexts. In the staff development networking project for SEA's there is the broad social-political-economic-ideational realities of the nation and of the community education movement. Within that orientation are the similarities and differences among the fifty states, along with the variability that SEA's must take into account within each state. The more specific context of each training workshop, and of the institutional setting within which the CERC staff operates, further guides the design. Those familiar with hourly-daily workshop implementation are fully aware that even that very specific contextual environment significantly influences what actually takes place. Indentification of the resources and constraints inherent in all these contexts helps establish the conceptual basis for a training design, which can then more responsively inform the specific objectives and implementation of the training.